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# **The Physical and Spatial Aspects of Public Schools in the District of Columbia**

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**Prepared for the DC Office of Planning  
by**

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## **Strategies for Transforming Public Schools into Community Anchors (Summary)**

### **Goals:**

1. Families from diverse backgrounds will move to neighborhoods throughout the City and enroll their children in a local public or public charter school.
2. School buildings will be a source of pride for the city through the preservation of historic structures and green space, creating for communities a 'sense of place'.
3. Schools will become community anchors offering a range of public services from family focused centers to large community service centers.
4. Responsibility for improving education in the city will be embraced by public and private partners.

### **Summary of the Strategies:**

- 1) To the extent feasible, the city should retain school sites (and adjacent public land) in the public domain.
- 2) The city should plan for the preservation and revitalization of all school facilities, regardless of the use(r).
- 3) The city should plan for the use or reuse of all school sites as part of an interagency neighborhood strategy that considers government, non-profit organizations, and private partners. The law requires that charter schools have first priority to excess school space.
- 4) Parks and Recreation, the Office of Planning, and DMPED should enhance and preserve open space and recreational areas adjacent to schools.
- 5) The city should support school modernization and/or historic preservation of schools to spur revitalization in targeted neighborhoods.
- 6) The city should encourage more public investment in the Strategic Neighborhood Improvement Program (SNIP) neighborhoods through a combination of budget priorities and public/private partnerships.
- 7) Through development agreements the city should encourage public/private partnerships that support schools in non-traditional settings.
- 8) DCPS, public charter schools, and the City should embrace a collaborative service plan and develop a 'community anchor' model for schools to include:
  - a. Family -focused centers for elementary schools (minimum level of service)
  - b. Community service centers for middle and/or high schools (health clinics, libraries, recreation centers)
- 9) The City, DCPS, and the public charter schools should commit to the neighborhood-based planning model. They should adjust citywide plans for health, recreation, social services, and schools to match the neighborhood priority areas and develop community service plans beginning with SNIP neighborhoods and schools scheduled for modernization.
- 10) High Schools should work with economic and university partners associated with their career academies to share resources and enhance training opportunities.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Public schools are the focal point for most residential communities. More than any other public facility, they define the social, economic, and physical characteristics of a neighborhood. *It is hard to imagine a strategy for creating or maintaining healthy, diverse communities that does not advocate for quality schools.* No place is this more evident, than in the District of Columbia, where it is imperative that school planning and community planning share the responsibility for the revitalization of aging, underutilized, and deteriorating neighborhoods.

In the last two years, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) has embarked on a concerted effort to modernize its aging school buildings and reform public education in the city. But the educational and social issues it faces are complex and resources are limited. Poverty, disrupted families, and neighborhood violence challenge schools to do more – stay open longer, expand their services, and adopt a broader constituency - if they are going to be successful. *It is vital to transform DC public schools with the active participation of the city support network.*

The research is rife with examples of successful community schools that are supported through a network of public and private services focused on developing safe, healthy families and neighborhoods. They cite improved test scores, better attendance, and lower drop-out rates as proof that “it takes a village...”. For the District of Columbia to propose a city-wide planning effort that successfully focuses on neighborhoods as the planning unit and public schools as the anchor, it cannot be business as usual.

To strategically reinvest in a few key neighborhoods at a time when fiscal resources are constrained is a rational planning goal. To target these investments for a three – five year period and then transition to new neighborhoods is dynamic for the world of planning which sees 20-25 year horizons. It is, however, completely contrary to the world of education and community services where every child and every family must be served to the fullest extent of limited resources every day. These agencies plan around equity. How to focus public investment in the target neighborhoods without additional resources (and without withdrawing critically needed support in other neighborhoods) will require innovation. Creative approaches are also essential given the burgeoning public charter school movement in the city and the growing number of school alternatives becoming available to parents.

For public schools to become community anchors for social and recreational services will require appropriating space and developing memorandums of understanding. But the Mayor’s vision is broader than collocation. The directive is to link the programmatic activities of the schools with health and human services to “nurture the emotional and physical health” of the entire neighborhood. Collaboration of this magnitude between traditionally isolated public providers (DCPS, city departments, and local non-profits) is not occurring now and will require a major paradigm shift in the way the District delivers education and community services. This directive will need absolute conviction and dynamic leadership to realize the full vision.

Finally, it is hard, if not impossible, to reconcile dynamic public investment and decentralized service delivery models with limited fiscal resources. Therefore this report makes the bold assumption that funding can and must be found. When challenged, it favors effectiveness over efficiency and long-term paybacks over short-term savings.

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<sup>1</sup> This policy paper has been modified by the Office of Planning to include additional information on public charter schools.

## The Planning Context – Where Have We Come From

Declining enrollment, aging buildings, inexperienced teachers, and poor test scores have plagued urban school districts since the 1970's. As metropolitan areas like Washington, DC grew, the middle class moved to the suburbs, leaving behind a predominantly poor African American population. Volumes have been written on the impact of this trend on American cities and public education. However, in the last decade, many cities have begun to see a new pattern with people moving back into the urban core. Who are they? Some are members of ethnic minorities – Hispanic, European, and Asian immigrants. But many of the new 'urban families' – at least these early pioneers – are younger or older professionals with no children in the public schools.

### Enrollment History 1970 - 2002

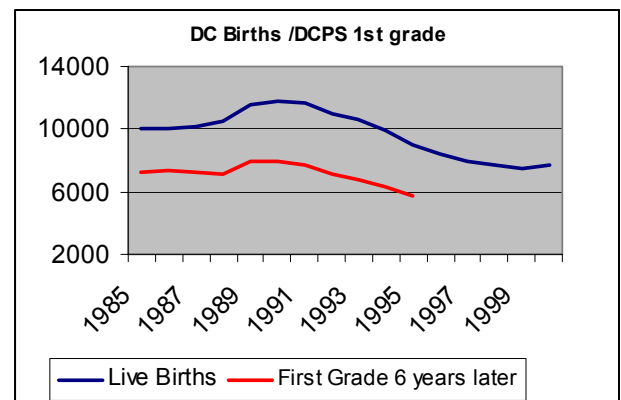
Several national trends may help explain the decline in the District's public school enrollment in the last three decades.

- Fertility rates in the 1950's were the highest of the century, causing school enrollments to swell in the 1960's and early 70's. But, as the Baby Boom generation aged, the percent of the enrollment in public schools declined dramatically – from 19% of the total population in the DC metropolitan area in 1970 to barely 10% in 2000. Despite overall population growth throughout the 1970's and 80's, metro area public school enrollment continued to decline.
- Compounding the aging of the population, the average fertility rates<sup>2</sup> declined. Nationwide, women were having fewer children later in life. Throughout the Washington suburbs, school districts were closing and consolidating schools in the inner ring even while they built schools for new subdivisions in the outer ring.

In the District of Columbia, as the city's population fell by 20% and birth rates<sup>3</sup> declined, public school enrollment plummeted from 146,000 students in 1970 to 80,000 students in 1990. Forty-three schools were closed, but most remained open and continue to serve a core community of Washingtonians that have attended the same school for generations.

The 1990's brought many of the same issues, along with a few new ones.

- The city's population continued to decline
- The number of annual births continued to fall (Graph 1)
- The first public charter schools opened in 1997 drawing more than 10,000 students in their first three years in operation
- Many families with young children have opted to start public charter schools instead of moving out of the city
- Political and management issues brought uncertainty and public mistrust of the school district



Graph 1

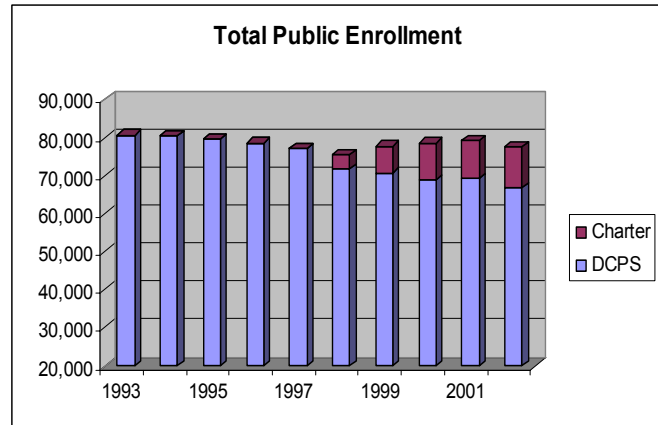
<sup>2</sup> Fertility rate refers to the average number of children women of childbearing age are having during their lifetime.

<sup>3</sup> Birth rate refers to the number of births per 1000 women in a given year.

Although enrollment in DCPS schools continued to decline in the 90's, **overall enrollment in public schools (charters included) began to stabilize**. Graph 2<sup>4</sup> shows enrollment history for all public schools in the last ten years. Total public school enrollment declined a mere 2% over the 10 years.

These last three years (1999-2002) have brought several positive changes for the future of the public schools

- The city's population may be stabilizing.
- The number of annual births has leveled out (approximately 7,600 annually 1998-2000).
- Charter schools may be offering a public school option that is retaining families.
- DCPS has had consistent administration for three years and begun the process of rebuilding faith in the schools.



Source: DCPS

Graph 2

### Demographic Indicators

The public schools serve some of the most vulnerable populations in the city – children and families. Because the schools generally are less diverse and serve a poorer segment of the population than the city as a whole, their families are more impacted by economic trends and the loss of public services. Table 1 summarizes DCPS demographics.

**Table 1: Summary of DCPS Student Demographics**

	District of Columbia	DC Public Schools*
Non-Hispanic White	27%	4.4%
African American	60%	85%
Hispanic/Latino	7.9%	8.75%
Asian American	2.7%	1.5%
General population/ children living in poverty	20%	31%
Children in single parent households	NA	44%
Disable adults/students in special education	22%	15%

US Census Bureau; 2000 Census

\* DCPS only

<sup>4</sup> All statistical information in this section provided by the District of Columbia Public Schools



## Physical and Spatial Aspect of Public Schools

At first glance the city seems sharply divided between the 'West of the Park' wealthier neighborhoods and the 'East of the River' poorer, African American neighborhoods. An analysis of the schools in the DCPS planning areas (A-H) seems to confirm this segregation. In fact, the open choice plan that DCPS follows may exacerbate this segregation in the demographically mixed 'in-between' neighborhoods of northeast and northwest.

Each planning area includes at least one high school, several middle schools, and 15-25 elementary schools. No assumptions were made about articulation to the next school level, boundaries, or political wards. However, because the planning areas roughly follow geographic barriers and major streets, they approximate the city's neighborhood clusters and provide a common ground for discussing demographic characteristics.

Although DCPS offers all students the opportunity to attend schools outside of their neighborhood, most students in the District (63%) attend a segregated neighborhood school – a school dominated by one race or ethnic group. Most of these schools serve predominantly poor neighborhoods in the eastern communities. As illustrated in Map 1, the schools in Areas A, B, C, D, and E are nearly 100% African American. According to the most recent census data these are also the communities that showed the greatest decline in population in the last decade.

Schools in areas F, G, and H serve a more diverse population of various race and ethnic groups with a range of economic status. The Hispanic population has grown substantially in these communities. Area F schools, located in the Adams Morgan and Cardozo-Shaw neighborhoods are more than 30% Hispanic/Latino. Schools to the north in Area H are 17% Hispanic.

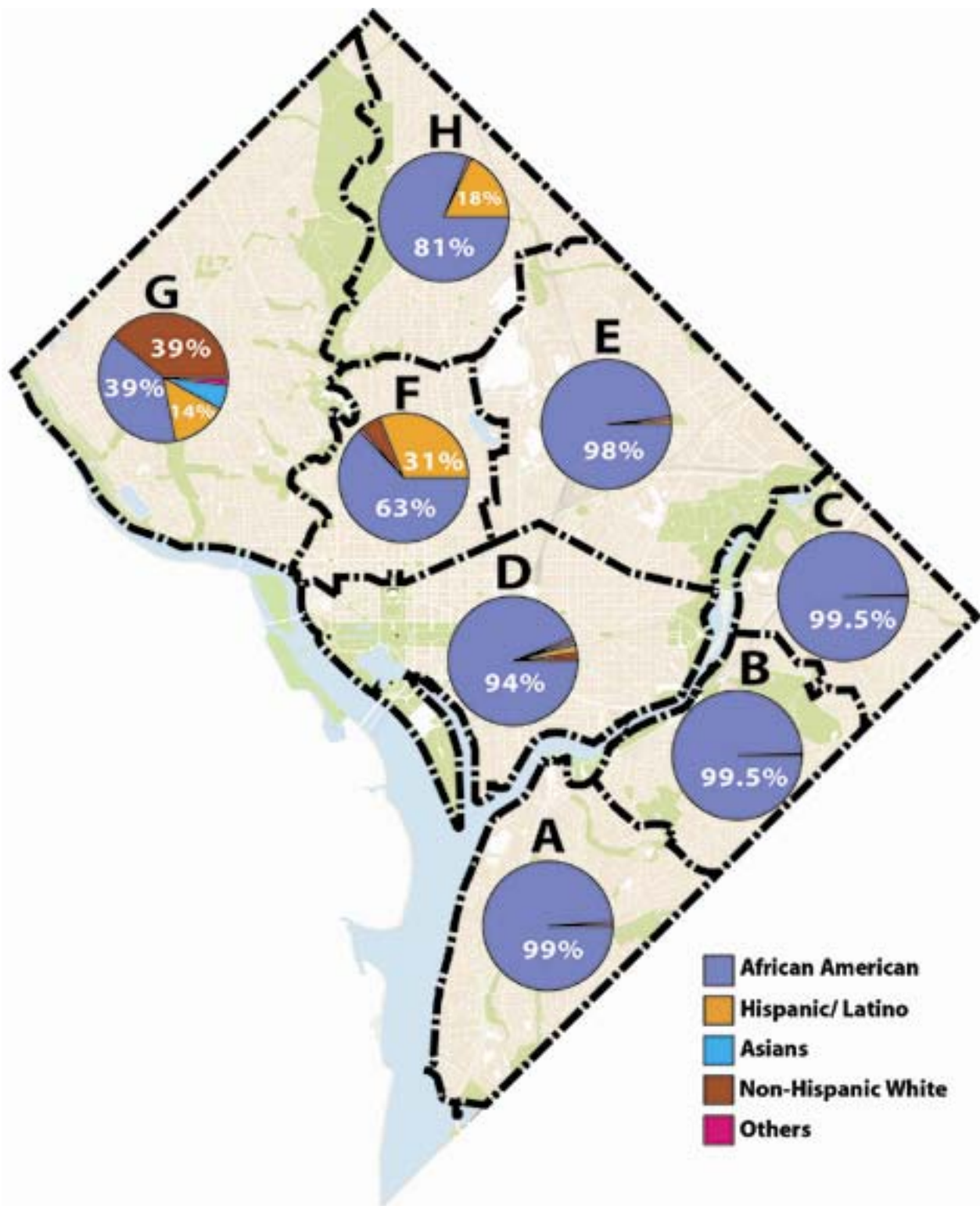
Area G schools generally serve neighborhoods in northwest Washington. These schools are some of the few in the District that do not qualify for Title 1 funding. The schools in this area average 38% white, 39% African American and 14% Hispanic.

DCPS allows students to choose to attend a school outside of their attendance zone if space is available in the receiving school. For this reason, some schools (many in areas F and G) have large 'out-of-boundary' populations. In recent years these schools have been targeted to receive students through the 'No Child Let Behind' process and to house more special education students (from private placements). These additional restraints and the modernization and reorganization of middle schools in Area G will impact student choices into these preferred schools.

The data presented above is for DCPS facilities only. The emergence of public charter schools also has affected student migration and school demographics. Strong charter schools have emerged in Planning Areas A, B, C, D, and E, meaning that potentially higher percentages of students in these areas are now attending school closer to home. Some of the charter schools are even drawing in the other direction, countering the trend shown in Map 2.

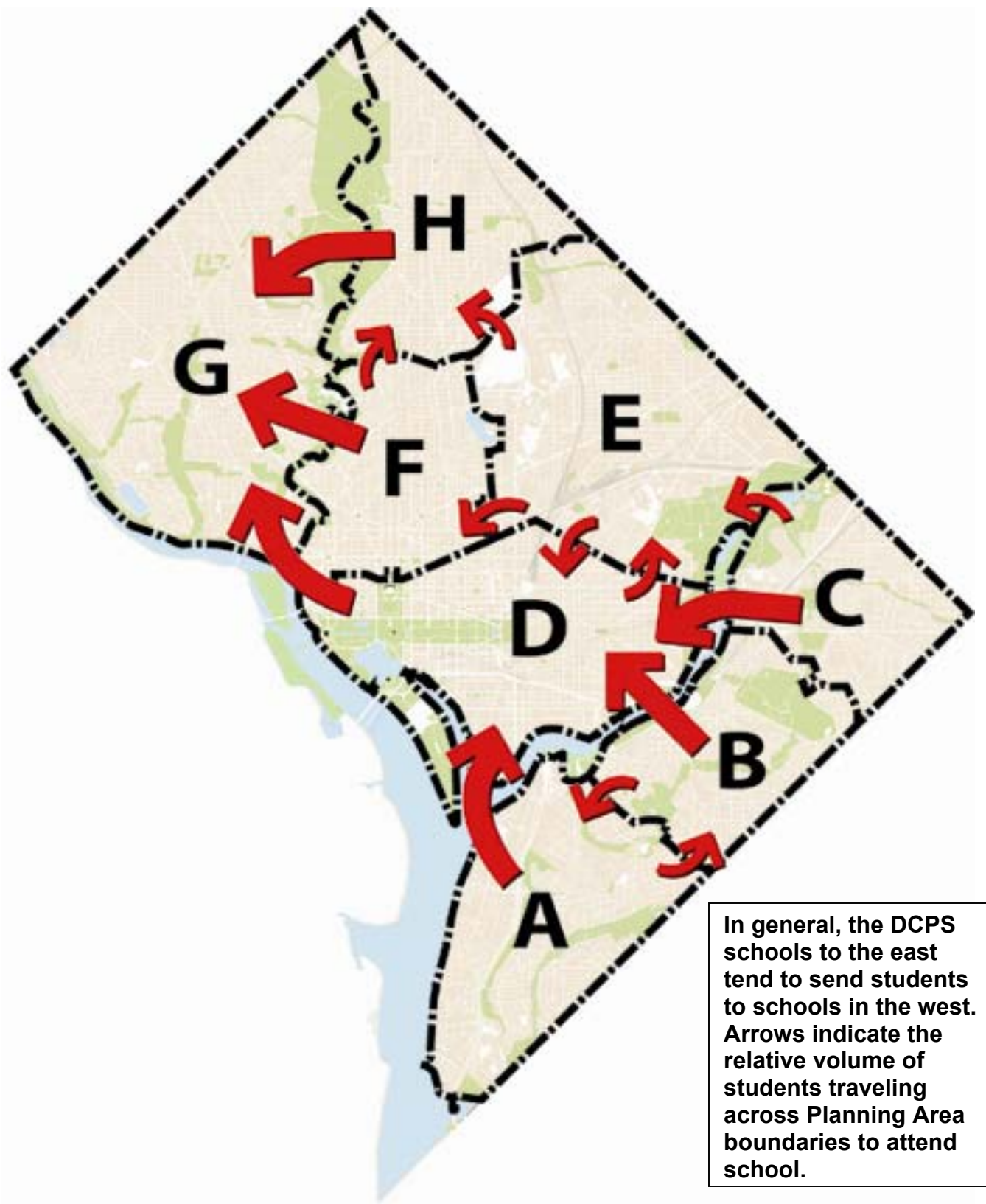
As the District of Columbia considers ways to create demographically diverse neighborhoods throughout the city, DCPS will be challenged to provide more quality schools in those transitioning areas – more schools like Randall Highlands, Burrville and Orr Elementary School. The power of student choice allows families to live in one part of the city and send their children to schools in other parts of the city. Making the neighborhood school the preferred choice will require good facilities and quality programs.





**MAP 1:**  
Demographic Profile of DCPS Schools By Planning Area





**MAP 2:**  
**DCPS Student Home-to-School Travel By Planning Area**

## School Facilities Capacity and Physical Condition

The poor physical condition of most DCPS schools is well documented - most recently in the DCPS Facilities Master Plan adopted by the Board of Education in 2000 (See table). Seventy per cent of the District's schools were in poor condition based on an evaluation performed by the Corps of Engineers in 1998. Ninety-seven per cent of the schools were operating in facilities that do not support contemporary school programs (Fair-poor rating). The city's school buildings are old and were poorly maintained during the years of declining enrollment and declining revenues. DCPS advocates a strategy that addresses both short and long term needs through modernization and component replacement programs. The current DCPS strategy will be discussed in the next section.

Rating	Physical Condition	Educational Adequacy
Good	5%	3%
Fair	25%	56%
Poor	70%	41%

As the District moves forward with a costly building program, there have been legitimate questions raised about excess space and the need to close schools. DCPS enrollment declined by nearly 50% in the last three decades. Yet it continues to operate 75% of the buildings.

- How much space does the city need for public education?
- How much space does DCPS have that is functional?
- How should the District utilize available space?

Many school districts and state education departments across the country use 'square feet per student' as a criteria to define the scope of new schools, develop budgets, and measure efficient utilization.

	Average	Range
<b>Elementary School Buildings</b>		
DCPS	150 SF	
Nationwide <sup>5</sup>	115 SF	111-150
<b>Middle School Buildings</b>		
DCPS	170 SF	
Nationwide	155 SF	114- 212
<b>High School Buildings</b>		
DCPS	192 SF	
Nationwide	160 SF	123- 211

DCPS uses an average square feet per student that assumes 150 SF for elementary school students, 170 SF for middle school students and 192 SF for high school students. (See comparison to national averages) Several factors affect space need - size of the school, average class size, demographic and program diversity, and site constraints. With small schools, low average class size, diverse populations, and small sites, DCPS can justify an average square feet per student in the District that is higher than the national average.

The 2000 Facilities Master Plan projected that DCPS would be able to reduce total square feet used for public schools by 3 million square feet over the life of the modernization program by using these standards. <sup>6</sup> In the last two years, new school designs and budgets have been held to the square feet criteria. However, roughly only one third of the schools could be replaced with smaller, more efficient buildings. For a variety of reasons, ranging from budget estimates to community support to historical significance, DCPS is modernizing most of its facilities.

<sup>5</sup> Council of Educational Facilities Planners International, Briefing Paper, Dr. Arthur Wohlers, Nov. 1995

<sup>6</sup> In 2001, DCPS increase the high school standard from 180 to 192 SF per student.

For existing schools, the square feet standards provide a limited view of the facilities challenges facing a district with many old and historic buildings designed for grander times.

- Older buildings often have wider corridors, multiple additions with inefficient connections, large boiler and fan rooms, and grand entrance foyers. Rather than a 38% net program space to the total building gross, older buildings could be 60-70% net to gross, adding thousands of unusable square feet to a building.
- Many schools built in the first half of the 1900's have unique spaces that are not part of the new standards – middle school auditoriums, recreation centers, health clinics, and pools. Communities advocate for the preservation of these spaces as neighborhood assets even as they fall into disrepair and become unused.
- Schools built to house larger populations have larger core areas – cafeterias, auditoriums, and media centers. Remodeling of these spaces is often not cost effective.
- Open space schools (1970's) use more space rather than walls to separate classes. Circulation and space utilization is inefficient and challenging for students and teachers.

Despite many exceptions to the square feet standard, DCPS plans to continue to use this benchmark for budgeting purposes.

In addition to using 'square feet per student' for new schools, most school districts also maintain a capacity for each school based on programs and class size. A program capacity allows DCPS to identify only the functional spaces in a building and calculate maximum use given the current program. Recently DCPS staff reviewed the utilization of every school building and updated the program criteria. Information by school will be available this fall as part of the Facilities Master Plan update.

Overall, the District has capacity for more than 73,000 students in regular or special schools. This capacity assumes the current level of staffing, shared use of the facilities with city and non-profit service providers, and the obsolescence of the buildings. Approximately 63,000 students attended those schools in 2002.

A summary of each planning area indicates that classroom space may be available at every grade level in most areas. The seats available reflect the program capacity minus enrollment in 2002. 'Seats Available' does not automatically mean 'vacant classrooms'. It does, however, suggest that the school can serve more students if the building is used more efficiently.

**Space Available or Needed by Area 2002 <sup>7</sup>**

	Elementary Seats	Middle Seats	High Seats
Area A	1482	705	455
Area B	430	511	255
Area C	1193	808	416
Area D	972	621	319
Area E	1033	1028	288
Area F	523	232	337
Area G	-222	51	-45
Area H	144	-107	441
Totals	5,555	3,849	2,466

DCPS supports student choice. Therefore enrollment and space available is a reflection of choice patterns. Several factors may change school choice patterns over the next ten years.

- Modernized schools will become preferred schools invigorating some neighborhoods, possibly at the cost of others.
- DCPS may fully transition to Grades 6-8 middle schools and Grades 9-12 high schools. This will shift more students into the middle and high schools.
- The opening of McKinley Technical High School and high school reform in general may retain more high school students at schools now showing significant out-migration pattern (specifically, schools on the east side of the city)

<sup>7</sup> Enrollment/capacity information from DCPS, Department of Facilities, 2003

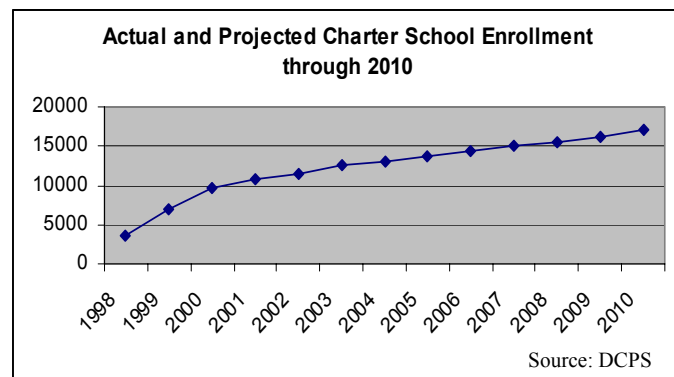
## Impact of Charter Schools

Charter schools are publicly funded schools that are required by DC law to be organized as non-profit corporations managed by a Board of Trustees. Charter schools offer an alternative educational environment to parents and students who often feel disenfranchised by the traditional school setting. They are free, publicly funded, and cannot discriminate or screen out students for academic or other reasons.

Charters may have a specific focus such as the arts or technology or offer a unique teaching method such as Montessori or Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound®. Some schools serve students with specific disabilities. Freed from many of the regulations and union contracts that reduce flexibility in public schools, they provide viable alternatives to the traditional public school. Public charters, including those chartered by the Board of Education, are independent of DCPS and exempt from laws, regulations, policies, and rules that any governmental body promulgates for DCPS.

In the District of Columbia, schools can be chartered through the DC Public Charter School Board or through the Board of Education. They receive operating funds through the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula. Under this formula, each DCPS and public charter student is funded at the same level. In 2002-2003, this was \$8,300 per student. Because they are tuition-free to any District of Columbia resident, they may only acquire additional funding through grants and donations. The DC law allows up to 20 new charter schools to be approved annually. However, far fewer applicants are approved each year. In the 2003, three new charter schools are projected to open. For 2004, eleven new charters applications have been submitted.

In 2002-03, there were 37 charter schools on 40 campuses (see table on the next page). These schools served approximately 11,500 students – 14% of the total public school enrollment. The schools are authorized to expand to approximately 18,000 students. If they expanded to this level by 2010, they would represent 22 % of the District's total enrollment (see Graph 3). In response to parental demand, some of these schools are considering amending their charters to permit them to open additional campuses.



Graph 3

In 2003, with the opening of new schools and growth in the existing schools, the charter school enrollment may grow another 800-1,000 students while DCPS is projected to decline by a similar amount. Many of the DC charter schools are not yet at full enrollment and are phasing their growth by adding an additional grade each year.

In a study prepared by George Washington University in 2000<sup>8</sup>, the charter schools had demographic characteristics similar to DCPS schools in their areas (with the exception of fewer special education students). Most of the charter schools are located east of 16<sup>th</sup> Street and serve the same neighborhoods as DCPS. Their students experience the same social, economic,

<sup>8</sup> The Center for Washington Area Studies, George Washington University, Making a Choice, Making a Difference? An Evaluation of Charter Schools in the District of Columbia.

and educational challenges. Although, not strictly, 'neighborhood' schools, charter schools have traditionally offered a variety of before and after school programs, family supports, and community networks.

Many of the charter schools are having difficulty securing an adequate facility. Some currently lease space in closed DC public schools and others are seeking space in underutilized schools. In the last two years, the charter schools have been working with the city to acquire space in surplus school buildings now managed by the city. The process has been slow while all parties develop a common language about what is available and what is needed. Regulations governing the use of surplus school space grants charter schools priority for available space in public school buildings. Charter attendance could accelerate if more facilities became available.

Charter schools face many of the same challenges as DCPS. Overall, the older charter schools are seeing higher attendance and college placements for graduates than DCPS schools. But test score results are still mixed in the District of Columbia<sup>9</sup> mirroring the national experience.<sup>10</sup> Charter school advocates contend that more time is needed before they will be able to show consistent, concrete improvement.

**Table 2: Charter School Enrollment, 2002-2003**

District of Columbia Charter Schools	Grades	2002 Enrollment	Projected (max cap)	Comments
Arts & Technology	PK-6	611	650	In a DCPS or Surplus school
Barbara Jones	5-8	120	500	
Kamit Institute for Magnificent Ach.	9-12	100	150	
KIPP DC/Key Academy	5-8	240	320	
Booker T Washington	9-12	158	300	
Community Academy	PK-8	425	550	In a DCPS or Surplus school
LAMB/Montessori/Bilingual	PS-6	0	144	
Marriot Hospitality	9-12	180	220	
Capital City	PK-8	159	400	
Carlos Rosario	Adult	600	600	
Maya Angelo #1	9-12	73	100	
Maya Angelo #2	9-12	0	100	Seeking housing in a DCPS facility
Meridian	PK-12	500	1000	
Cesar Chavez for Public Policy	9-12	240	240	
Childrens Studio of Arts and Humanities	PK-6	110	144	In a DCPS or Surplus school
DC Prep Academy	4-8	0	250	
Mechanical Industrial Tech (MIT)	9-12	0	224	
New School for Enterprise & Development	9-12	450	450	

<sup>9</sup> Testimony of Thomas Loughlin, Chair of DC Public Charter Board, March 6, 2003 (Re: Stat 9 scores)

<sup>10</sup> A Decade of Charters Schools from Theory to Practice, Katrina Bulkley and Jennifer Fisler, CPRE Policy Briefs, April 2002



**Table 2: Charter School Enrollment, 2002-2003, continued**

District of Columbia Charter Schools	Grades	2002 Enrollment	Projected (max cap)	Comments
Eagle Academy	PS-K	0	116	
Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community	K-6	250	250	
Next Step/EI Proximo Paso	9-adult	60	100	
Options	5-8	135	175	
Friendship-Edison Blow-Pierce	6-8	759	762	In a DCPS or Surplus school
Friendship-Edison Woodson	9-12	980	980	In a DCPS or Surplus school
Friendship-Edison Chamberlain	K-5	837	837	In a DCPS or Surplus school
Friendship-Edison Woodbridge	K-5	404	404	In a DCPS or Surplus school
Paul JHS	7-9	600	730	In a DCPS or Surplus school
Roots	1-8	56	60	
Sasha Bruce	6-12	72	250	
School of Arts and Learning (SAIL)	K-5	103	145	
Howard Road Academy	K-12	550	1270	
School of Education & Dev. (SEED)	7-12	170	240	
Southeast Academy of Scholastic Excell.	K-adult	687	1725	
Hyde Leadership Academy	K-12	700	700	In a DCPS or Surplus school
Ideal Academy	PK-8	200	350	In a DCPS or Surplus school
Thurgood Marshall Academy	9-12	86	400	
Tree of Life Community	K-4	100	300	
Integrated Design and Electron.	9-12	300	300	In a DCPS or Surplus school
Jos-Arz Academy	9-12	40	200	
Tri-Community	PK-12	22	1084	
Village Learning Center	PK-12	300	300	In a DCPS or Surplus school
Total		11,377	18,020	

## Key components of the DCPS Long Range Facilities Plan

In December 2000, the District of Columbia Board of Education adopted a Facilities Master Plan that provided policy guidance and made specific recommendations for a 10-year capital program designed to build a new generation of schools. DCPS is in the third year of implementation.

The key components of the Plan as they apply to city planning efforts include the following recommendations

- **Local Community Input** - The Facilities Plan was developed with extensive participation from the DCPS community. Community input is an integral part of the implementation and updating process.
- **A New Generation of Schools** – The Facilities Plan outlines a capital improvement program that modernizes or replaces ten schools every year – one in each of the eight planning zones and two high schools. The schools for each tier were selected as part of the community input process and provided guidance through the first 4-5 years of the program (Tier 0 projects are now under construction). Through the modernization process, DCPS would ‘right size’ the schools for both capacity and square feet.
- **School Size** – The Facilities Plan supports small schools. Research indicates that students perform better and stay in school longer when they attend small schools, particularly in urban communities. The Plan also supports ‘neighborhood’ schools that serve predominantly walking communities.
 

	Desired School Size
Elementary Schools	300-500 students
Middle Schools	400-600 students
High Schools	600-1200 students
- **Retaining School Buildings and Sites** – The Facilities Plan recommends that all school buildings and sites remain in the public domain to support the modernization program’s need for swing space and to guard against future demographic changes.
- **Community Use** – The Plan encourages joint use of school facilities that are “consistent with DCPS philosophies and have sufficient local school community support”.<sup>11</sup> The communities expressed a strong interest in creating ‘community hubs’ at the schools.
- **Public & Private Partnerships** - “Partnerships could take a variety of forms from co-locating organizations with educational functions that could reinforce the curriculum to joint re-development of neighborhood housing and services. [DCPS] recognizes that there may be curricular opportunities, opportunities to increase utilization of existing buildings, and economic advantages that may accelerate the implementation of this plan. [DCPS] recommends that public/private partnerships remain in the control of the public schools and that the plan not be compromised.” (DCPS Facilities Master Plan)
- **Charter Schools** – The Plan encourages cooperative planning between DCPS and charter schools regarding facilities needs. A new law requires that the planning process be opened up to the charter schools and that the needs of charter school students be taken into account.

<sup>11</sup> DCPS Facilities Master Plan, December 2000



- **Updating the Plan** – DCPS is required to update the plan continually (CIP process) with a major update every three years. DCPS is planning a major update in Fall 2003.

### School Reform and Program Quality

The modernization and rebuilding of the DCPS buildings to be safe, secure, and educationally sound is intended to ensure that every public school student can learn in a suitable school building. But is also an integral part of a broader strategy to train teachers, define rigorous curricula, standardize programs and expectations, and encourage school communities to invest in their neighborhood school. This process will require the successful coordination of both the individual school community and the District central staff.

For many years, DCPS has allowed schools to develop individual school plans that defined the educational program, staff allocation, and expenditures on an annual basis – school-based management. This autonomy has created a system of ‘unique’ schools that reflect the priorities of the administrator(s) and the school community. Neighborhood loyalty and local control are part of the political fabric that operates the city. As a result, there are many excellent schools in the District supported by enthusiastic parents and staff. However, there are also many schools throughout the District that struggle daily with absenteeism, low expectations, and isolation.

Many people consider the charter movement to be a form of school reform that offers students a ‘unique’ school that reflects the priorities of the administrator(s) and the school community. Like DCPS, many charter schools are successful while others struggle and ultimately fail. The major difference between the charter schools and the DCPS school based management approach is that the charters are free of central regulations (union contracts, special education mandates) as well as central supports (facilities, transportations, food services, etc.). Both DCPS schools and charter schools have the potential to be hubs of neighborhood activity. Regardless of who operates the facility, the school buildings themselves will continue to be occupied by public school students and can support community programs.

During the last two years, DCPS has focused attention on some of the most troubled schools in the system through the ‘transformation’ schools initiative. These schools begin the school year with new administration, many new staff, and new educational processes and goals. Minor facilities and equipment issues are addressed within limited budgets.

Current reform efforts focus on providing central office support to high schools for curriculum development, professional development, climate and school culture, and assessments and evaluations. A key element to high school reform centers on developing three to four small learning academies in every high school with specialized facilities and curriculum in high demand careers. Career academies may include health sciences, engineering, information technology, and environmental sciences. Schools will be encouraged to develop meaningful partnerships with universities and businesses. Although the reform goals and strategies are centrally initiated and supported, the reform process takes place at the school level.

It is not likely that DCPS will abandon school-based management in the near future. At the same time, DCPS will continue to centralize certain functions such as facilities management, accounting, personnel, professional training, and curriculum development. Planning for quality schools and neighborhood revitalization can be coordinated at a central source, but it can only occur at the local school level.

## The Regulatory Context

### Role of the School Board and Mayor

DCPS is an agency of the City of the District of Columbia with an elected and appointed board. The Board of Education sets the policies of the schools, including the appointment of the superintendent. In general the Board operates autonomously with little interference from the city into the business of schools.

The Board of Education consists of eleven members – four (4) are elected by ward, and the president is elected citywide. Four (4) board members are appointed by the Mayor. This structure should favor the Mayor's agenda; however, there does not appear to be any consistent pattern in this regard.

As an agency of the District of Columbia, the Board is dependent on the city for its primary funding for operating and capital expenditures. The Mayor and City Council influence the direction of the schools through the denial or allocation of funds. Traditionally, the Mayor has not exercised his/her authority for line item control over the capital budget but tends to approve a total allocation and allows DCPS to determine the priorities.

The public charter schools are regulated by two chartering boards—the DC Public Charter School Board and the Board of Education. The charter schools are not part of DCPS and are not considered agencies of District government. However, their budget is part of the DC education budget. Charter schools have no capital budget and no bounding authority. However, they do receive an annual per-pupil facilities allowance and can take advantage of District bond programs.

The District has a unique financing arrangement. Not only must the District carry out the roles of a city, a county, and a state, but its budget must be directly approved by Congress. The city's budget is often caught in the political jockeying of national politics and delayed until well into the fiscal year. Public education budgeting in this environment is clearly a challenge.

### Control Over School Buildings

DCPS is still emerging from the turmoil of the 1990's when the city took over large parts of the school district's central operations. While it continues to build the internal capacity to manage its finances, facilities, and contracting, there is still overlap and oversight in many of the financial areas.

School facilities management is an area where the City has considerable influence and responsibility. Chapter 35 of the Municipal Regulations outlines the permissible uses of school buildings and grounds. The city owns all school sites and facilities but has vested the control of all public school buildings and grounds to DCPS. DCPS has first priority for the use of school buildings for education or administration. It may lease or share the space with complementary and compatible users. Preference for joint use must be given first to charter schools and then to agencies of the District of Columbia. It may not, however, lease to a private or parochial school and it may not sell the building. Charter schools now own a number of former school buildings and occupy several others under use agreements or leases.



### **Physical and Spatial Aspect of Public Schools**

Currently, long-term lease agreements must consider the opinions and needs of the neighborhood. Code requires that the superintendent notify the community and hold a public hearing. The superintendent must then forward the plan to the Board of Education, who may deny the lease.

Where DCPS wishes to use city land or facilities or a city agency wants to use DCPS property, the two agencies develop Memoranda of Understanding to guide the relationship. Most of these understandings provide long term, mutual benefit to both agencies.

### **National and Historic Standing**

DCPS' location in the nation's capital gives it unique standing in the world of school construction. Because it is required to submit its projects (exterior) to the Commission on Fine Arts, they are reviewed along side some of the nation's most important monuments. Their projects are held to the same high standards as all buildings that reflect the city's heritage.

In addition, DCPS must submit project plans to the National Capital Planning Commission and the DC Historic Preservation Office. With more than 40% of the city's schools built before 1940, these reviews play a significant role in the preservation of older buildings.

### **Other Regulatory Challenges**

Public Schools are subject to a wide range of regulations and rules that protect the rights of children, determine the length of the school day, require the removal of asbestos, and guide the design of school buildings.

## Where Are We Going – Predicting the Future

There are many trends that may impact education in the District of Columbia in the future. National trends in educational reform may bring extended school days, community use of schools, increased computer literacy, new business or university partners, and character development. Trends toward 'Community Schools' will encourage better links to the neighborhood and community by bringing a support network into the school building or by sending students out into the community for internships and project-based learning.

Five trends specific to DC that may impact the physical and spatial aspects of public schools are highlighted.

- Overall public school enrollment is declining as a result of fewer births and smaller households in the 90's. DCPS enrollment is projected to decline by 10-15% over the next ten years.
- At the same time, the student population is becoming more Hispanic and less African American. This shift will cause small pockets of growth in neighborhoods with large numbers of Hispanic households.
- More parents are choosing schools outside of DCPS. Charter school enrollment is projected to increase steadily until it comprises up to 20% of the total public school enrollment by 2010.
- Contrary to a nationwide trend toward increased financing for school construction, DC has not provided adequate funding to modernize the District's school facilities according to the DCPS Facilities Master Plan.
- Communities are asking that their neighborhood school become a 'community hub'. High schools are becoming more career focused and are reaching out to communities, universities, and businesses to create practical, real world experiences.

### Enrollment Projections 2003 - 2010

The forecasting of school enrollment requires the analysis of multiple data sources including birthrates, the demographic make-up of neighborhoods, local and regional economic and housing trends, and program and boundary changes. Forecasts are most reliable when enrollment is projected for large geographic areas for one or two years in the future. Conversely, accuracy diminishes as the geographic area becomes smaller and the forecast is for more distant points in the future.

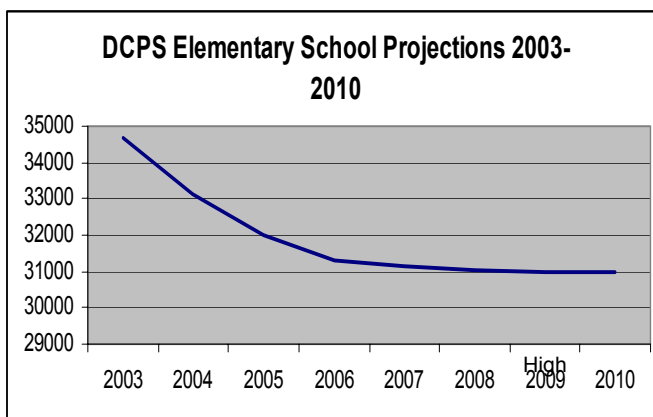
To prepare the forecast, a history of each school's grade-by-grade enrollment is compiled and analyzed. This history reveals patterns in the "aging" or progression (less out-migration factors) of students from one grade to the next. These patterns are extrapolated to develop a school's basic forecast. This approach, termed the Cohort Survival Model, is the most commonly applied forecasting method for schools, nationally.

However, the data yielded by the basic survivorship model is only the foundation for the enrollment projections. The model data must then be compared to projected city population growth associated with new housing starts and in-migration rates.

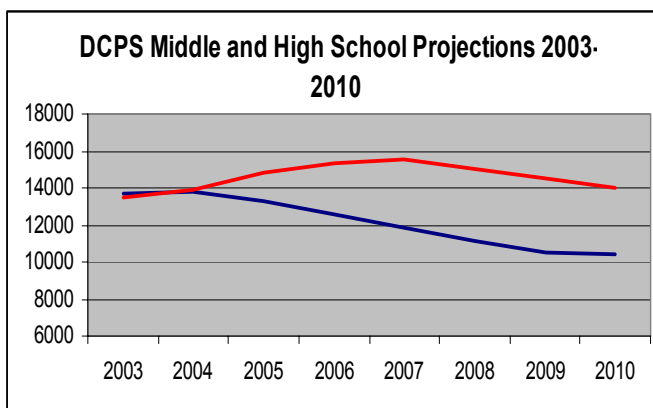
The most difficult segment of the K-12 population to predict is each year's kindergarten class. In order to project the kindergarten population for each year profiles of residential birth data are drawn, then matched to anticipated growth patterns. Declining annual births from the late 1990's is the single most important factor impacting elementary enrollment for the next 3 years. As these smaller grades matriculate to the upper grades, similar enrollment declines in the middle and high schools are a statistical inevitability.

Recognizing the uncertainty that surrounds long-term forecasts, the District annually adjusts the enrollment projections. The adjacent Graph 4 shows the DCPS current six year forecast by school level. Total enrollment is projected to decline from 66,000 in 2002 to 56,000 in 2008. Decline at the middle and high schools is likely to continue through the end of the decade. Most of this decline will be offset by an increase in charter school enrollment.

How might these projections change? In 2000, the Facilities Master Plan proposed three scenarios for future enrollment change in the District of Columbia – high, low, and moderate. This year, DCPS has assumed a moderate projection based on the current trends.



Middle



Source: DCPS Department of Facilities

Graph 4

However, if new housing developments in the city attract families and the DCPS efforts to improve facilities and educational opportunities are successful, the projected decline may be somewhat offset by in-migration and retention. Alternatively, if a new private scholarship program sends current students to private schools, this projection may be optimistic.

### Demographic Changes

The 2000 census highlighted many trends in the District that point to increasing concentrations of poverty and homelessness, single parent households, drug addiction, and special needs populations. All of these socio-economic indicators are correlated with student and school success. This is a spiral that has impacted the schools since the 1980's. Currently there are no signs of change.

It is difficult to project demographic change because of the complex economic and social factors that effect migration patterns. At least two demographic trends in the city may have a long term impact on the schools and should be highlighted – an increase in households without children and an increase in the Hispanic population.

In the last decade, the district has begun to see a decline in households with children offset by an increase in non-family households (2000 US Census). If this trend continues, population growth in the city may generate little increase in school enrollment. In 2000, there was one student in a public school for every seven residents. This is higher than the average for metropolitan area of one student for every 9.5 residents.

For the projected 100,000 new residents in the District, several possible growth scenarios may result (see table). Early anecdotal information suggest that new residents moving into the city will not be families with children and that enrollment growth could be less than 10,000. This growth from in-migration could offset declining enrollment from lower birth rates and smaller households. Conversely, new families may opt to send their children to charter schools at an increasing rate, or may opt to leave the District when their students reach school age.

Student : Residents	Population	Enroll Growth
Current @ 1:7	100,000	14,286
15% change @ 1:8	100,000	12,500
Metro Average @ 1:9.5	100,000	10,526

The Hispanic/Latino population is projected to double nation-wide<sup>12</sup>. Washington DC has a small but growing Hispanic community. If the current trend continues, the Hispanic population may grow sufficiently to dominate parts of the north/central city – school planning areas F, G, and H. This population traditionally has larger households and could create a need for school space in areas already at or near capacity. They could precipitate a range of curriculum and service changes including bi-lingual education and multi-cultural activities.

By contrast, if the African American population in many communities on the east side of the city continues to decline, some neighborhood schools may need to be consolidated and closed.

### School Choice

Families throughout the country are changing their thinking about public schools. For generations, parents sent their children to the neighborhood school along with the rest of their friends. They bought their house only after inquiring about and inspecting the local schools. If they became dissatisfied, they 'voted with their feet' and moved. With the growth in magnet schools, parents began to see alternatives to the local school that provided advantages for gifted and/or special needs children. But for the average parent there were few choices; private schools were too expensive or too inconvenient to consider.

With the growth in charter schools and voucher programs, the average parent now has choices beyond the neighborhood schools. The almost immediate success of these options in many cities may be a sign that 'Choice' will become a mainstay of the urban public school environment.

Generally, families choose a school other than their neighborhood school because they are dissatisfied with their local school. However, what motivates them to choose a particular school is a little hazy. "Studies generally show a positive relationship between the choice of school and measures of school quality, implying that parents are making decisions that are likely to benefit their children academically. However, many of the cues that parents may use to identify good schools are strongly correlated with characteristics of the students attending those schools,

<sup>12</sup> The Changing American Pie, 1999 and 2025; AmeriStat, August 2000



such as their socioeconomic status.”<sup>13</sup> A study performed by Amy Stuart Wells in St Louis suggests that “feelings of familiarity, ethnic solidarity, and school proximity can be more important than “objective” school-quality measures, parental aspirations, or an “achievement ideology.”<sup>14</sup> Charter school advocates suggest that this may be due to parents’ limited access to quality information.

The idea that parents can and should ‘shop’ for their child’s schools has already introduced great uncertainty in planning for public schools. Will charter and/or private school capacity continue to grow as long as there is demand for alternative choices? What is the demand, i.e. the number of students that would leave their local school if given a convenient alternative? How should DCPS compensate in the future? With a current waiting list for charter schools and ready takers for vouchers, DCPS has not reached the ceiling for that demand.

The impact of choice may be further complicated as DCPS modernizes facilities. Most school districts (including recent examples in DCPS – Oyster and Miner currently) see increases in enrollment after modernization/replacement. An open choice plan within DCPS allows parents to choose from among the District’s schools as long as space is available. More and more students may become concentrated in the modernized schools leaving behind poorer facilities in other neighborhoods.

In this environment of growing uncertainty, planning must be based on what likely won’t change—how many school buildings District children need—rather than on what certainly will change—the specific space needs of DCPS, the charter schools, and others in the education arena. A neutral, objective approach to planning is imperative.

School choice will create a future public school environment that is more diverse, less cohesive, and more market-driven. The term ‘Public School’ in the District of Columbia must be broadly defined to include all the school buildings and all the public (maybe private) school providers.

### Financial Challenge and Implementing the Facilities Master Plan

Nationwide, funding for the modernization of older facilities has increased dramatically in the last 5 years. States like California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Texas have come forward in the last five years with billions in school construction funding. Many states like Massachusetts and Maryland fund 60% or more of the local construction dollar. Why? States see better facilities as a part of the overall vision to try to improve student performance and retain vibrant communities.<sup>15</sup>

For Washington, D.C., there is no ‘state’ to appeal to for funding. Funding for school construction in the District has been inconsistent ranging from a few million dollars in the mid 90’s to \$220 million in 2003. Despite a 15-year school facilities plan, the adopted FY 2004-09 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) includes no funding for school construction in 2006-09.

The original Facilities Master Plan envisioned modernizing or replacing the District’s 147 schools in ten years. The subsequent Implementation Plan proposed a more moderate program of ten schools per year over 15 years. One school in each planning area was targeted for modernization/replacement to ensure an equitable distribution of quality school buildings.

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<sup>13</sup> School Choice as Education Reform: What Do We Know?, Dan Goldhaber, ERIC Digest Number 165.

<sup>14</sup> Where Charter School Policy Fails: The Problems of Accountability and Equity, Amy Stuart Wells 1996

<sup>15</sup>Capital Expenditures, Education Week, Jessica Sandham, June 2001



DCPS estimated that the modernization program alone will cost \$200 million annually or a total of \$3 billion over a 15 year period. The most recent Master Plan is recommending downsizing the annual cost of modernization to six schools a year.

The Facilities Master Plan modernization program was a break from the District's previous capital program that had concentrated on basic systems repairs and replacements. DCPS, like many other districts across the country, found that basic maintenance programs failed to address the systemic and educational obsolescence of their buildings. The modernization plan instead directed funds into approximately 30 schools during the next three years to make a big difference in the educational environment. The poor condition of many of the District's schools requires that DCPS continue with both a component replacement program as well as a comprehensive modernization program. The financial burden of both programs has challenged the city's fiscal capacity.

Since the adoption of the Facilities Plan, the city has been unable to fully fund the DCPS capital budget request. DCPS was able to fund construction for the first two years of the program - Tiers 0 and 1. Tier 2 is funded for planning only. There is no funding at this time for Tier 3.

With dwindling revenue for capital and operating budgets, declining enrollment, and pressure from the charter schools for access to under-utilized public school buildings, DCPS may need to reevaluate its current direction. Over the years groups have suggested various options.

- Develop alternative funding sources (federal government, private/commercial donations, bonding or other lease-back options, additional taxing levies)
- Modernize fewer schools over a longer period of time
- Scale back the scope of the modernization program and dedicate more funds to major capital and small renovation projects
- Close schools that are in very poor condition or in neighborhoods with declining enrollments; make more efficient use of the remaining buildings
- Lease or sell additional surplus schools to public charters, since the funds go directly to DCPS for modernization.

The DCPS modernization program is consistent with the city's strategy to target a few neighborhoods for investment and revitalization. It adheres to a philosophy that change requires boldness. Continued under-funding of the CIP and a return to a 'piece meal' approach to capital improvements in DCPS will be detrimental to efforts to revitalize neighborhoods.

### Community Schools/Schools in the Communities

The Coalition for Community Schools defines a 'community school' as "both a set of partnerships and a place where services, supports and opportunities lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Using public schools as a hub, inventive, enduring relationships among educators, families, community volunteers, business, health and social service agencies, youth development organizations and others committed to children are changing the educational landscape - permanently - by transforming traditional schools into partnerships for excellence."

The coordination of education, health, and social services in one location is not a new concept, however, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of programs in school buildings in the last decade. Many advocates consider the community school a key ingredient to

education reform. Most programs point to an improvement in school culture associated with higher attendance, reduced violence, and better communication with families.<sup>16</sup>

Examples of successful community schools around the country show strong ‘bottom-up’ initiatives for developing a holistic approach to education that includes youth programs, family services, and parent/neighborhood involvement. Funding for programs and coordinators often comes through the United Way and/or federal and state grants. The leadership and coordination is provided through community service coalitions.

During the DCPS Master Plan process, many community members expressed strong support for providing neighborhood services for health, recreation, and adult training programs through the local school. Some DC schools already house city and non-profit providers intended to support their families and neighborhoods. Many more DC buildings have the capacity and, in some cases, the appropriate facilities to house community services – health and dental clinics, recreation rooms, day care facilities, pools, and computer labs. The current examples of school based community services in the City do not appear to be part of a broader planning effort and do not necessarily have strong ties to the schools that house them.

School*	Service
Cardozo HS, Eliot JHS	TANF/Day Care
Ballou, Roosevelt, Spingarn HS	Stay - youth and adult after school - evening classes
Moten ES	Youth Challenge
	Therapeutic Nursery
MM Washington	Dental Clinic/closed
RH Terrell JHS	Recreation Center for youth and seniors
Walker Jones ES	Walker Jones Health Clinic
Woodson HS	Wellness Center Pool
Wheatley ES	Tutors

\*Examples of schools and providers

This year DCPS has assigned staff to work with the City to identify ‘wrap-around’ services that would be planned routinely as part of the broader planning effort for the schools. Similar partnerships could be pursued with the charter schools.

In addition to bringing service providers into the school buildings, DCPS is developing career academies in all its high schools. A key aspect of these academies is the university and business partnerships that includes outside teachers, innovation, internships, and future job opportunities. Most DC high schools have several partnerships. However, only a few partners provide consistent on-going student and staff support.

<sup>16</sup> Evaluation of Community Schools: An Early Look, Joy Dryfoos, Coalition for Community Schools

## District of Columbia Public Schools in 2025

There are reasons to believe that the city and its public schools are turning a corner – stabilizing population, revitalizing housing, transforming schools, and coordinating government planning. The following picture of 2025 assumes that DCPS has seen its darkest days, but the future may be as difficult to imagine in 2025 as today would have been in 1980.

Education futurists insist that technology will revolutionize education. They postulate every possible outcome from the total elimination of books and school buildings to less extreme changes in the way teachers teach. Most can agree on a few clear trends.

- Individual education plans (IEP) will be customized to student's strengths, weakness and learning styles. Every child will have an IEP.
- Classrooms will become less content-based, teacher-centered, and more about 'learning to learn' and student-centered.
- Grade groupings will become less rigid with a variety of options from early childhood centers to college-like settings in the high schools.
- The traditional structure of the school day will change. Most schools will operate around the clock and all year.
- Schools (public, charter, and private) will differentiate themselves based on programmatic themes, teaching style, grade groupings, school calendar, etc.
- Education will be a life-long activity with the local schools and community colleges as learning resource centers.
- Business and government will become more invested in training current and future employees.

For DC public schools, the opportunity for change may be easier and more urgent than in the larger suburban schools districts. The traditional school setting, day, and calendar are not consistently successful with the city's children, and the competition from charter schools and vouchers is immediate. By 2025,

- Technology will make it possible for students and parents to have the information (assessments and individual education plans) to make informed decisions about their education and be able to choose a school that best meets their need.
- Schools (DCPS, charter, and private) will operate in a quasi-market setting offering unique educational environments to attract students. Neutral 'Choice Centers' will counsel families on the best alternatives and assist with the application process.
- All school buildings will be safe, clean, and technologically up-to-date. Some buildings will be used by charter schools or charter cooperatives (several schools). Some schools will have been razed. However, most of the 150 schools currently operating will still be schools.
- Most students will still be able to walk to their neighborhood elementary school. This will be the primary advantage for DCPS. And most students will choose this as their preferred school.
- All schools will offer early childhood programs, extended day programs, and summer enrichment programs.

- Elementary schools will offer after school family and senior services, parent centers, recreation programs, etc. Every school will have a community coordinator.
- DCPS elementary schools will be more successful at retaining residents than middle and high schools. Urban middle and high schools, however, will continue to be seen as ‘less safe’ because they are larger and draw their students from more diverse neighborhoods where crime and poverty may continue to plague the city. (Note: Enrollment in public middle schools is, on average, lower in urban and suburban districts throughout the country)
- DCPS high schools will operate on flexible 14 hour days, offering apprenticeships /internships, dual enrollment with post-secondary institutions, travel experiences, etc. Because most DCPS high schools are historically significant, they will be modernized rather than replaced with smaller more efficient buildings.
- High schools will be open in the evenings for adult education programs and recreation.
- The city’s ‘Small Schools’ and customized programs will become attractive to urban families disillusioned with large ‘cookie cutter’ suburban schools.
- The Hispanic community will continue to be concentrated in their current and adjacent neighborhoods and have unique educational expectations and requirements. Because of high birth rates and dense housing choices by Hispanic families, schools in their communities may be at or over capacity.

The key point illustrated by this scenario is that it is difficult to predict what will happen in the city in five years, much less twenty years. We do know that the educational landscape is changing. We do know that we have a sufficient number of school buildings to accommodate all the public school students the District has or is likely to have anytime soon. We do know that most of those facilities are in poor condition and that many are underutilized—and that if they were modernized and properly used, they could drive neighborhood revitalization all across the District.

We also know that the shifting educational landscape means that the way we plan for educational facilities needs to change. New players need to be brought into the process.

## Goals and Strategies (Summary)

### Goals:

1. Families from diverse backgrounds will move to neighborhoods throughout the City and enroll their children in a local public or public charter school.
2. School buildings will be a source of pride for the city through the preservation of historic structures and green space, creating for communities a 'sense of place'.
3. Schools will become community anchors offering a range of public services from family focused centers to large community service centers.
4. Responsibility for improving education in the city will be embraced by public and private partners.

### Summary of the Strategies:

- 1) To the extent feasible, the city should retain school sites (and adjacent public land) in the public domain.
- 2) The city should plan for the preservation and revitalization of all school facilities, regardless of the use(r).
- 3) The city should plan for the use or reuse of all school sites as part of an interagency neighborhood strategy that considers government, non-profit organizations, and private partners. The law requires that charter schools have first priority to excess school space.
- 4) Parks and Recreation, the Office of Planning, and DMPED should enhance and preserve open space and recreational areas adjacent to schools.
- 5) The city should support school modernizations and/or historic preservation of schools to spur revitalization in targeted neighborhoods.
- 6) The city should encourage more public investment in the SNIP neighborhoods through a combination of budget priorities and public/private partnerships.
- 7) Through development agreements the city should encourage public/private partnerships that support schools in non-traditional settings.
- 8) DCPS, public charter schools, and the city should embrace a collaborative service plan and develop a 'community anchor' model for schools to include:
  - a. Family -focused centers for elementary schools (minimum level of service)
  - b. Community service centers for middle and/or high schools (health clinics, libraries, recreation centers)
- 9) The City, DCPS, and public charter schools should commit to the neighborhood-based planning model. They should adjust citywide plans for health, recreation, social services, and schools to match the neighborhood priority areas and develop community service plans beginning with SNIP neighborhoods and schools scheduled for modernization.
- 10) High Schools should work with economic and university partners associated with their career academies to share resources and enhance training opportunities.

### General Provision for the Preservation and Use of all School Sites

There are more than 200 public school buildings in the District of Columbia. They are located on major streets, near prestigious intersections, and in the heart of residential neighborhoods. Some occupy the most desirable real estate in the city. Most are 'distinctively' schools, easily identified by casual visitors as a public building. Many are architectural gems and historically significant to the tapestry of the city. As a group, they are the city's greatest asset. Whether they are operated by DCPS, a charter school, or the city, they pose a unique opportunity to impact the vitality of the local neighborhood. The use and condition of the building and grounds make a daily statement about government investment and expectations. If the city is to grow and support healthy, safe neighborhoods, the preservation and revitalization of these public facilities must be a priority.

It may be cost effective and equitable in the short term to consolidate schools. It reduces the inventory of older, underutilized buildings. It reduces operating costs for administration, utilities, and maintenance. It frees public buildings for other purposes such as senior housing, charter schools, or recreation centers.

Based on current enrollment, DCPS needs approximately 98 elementary schools (average of 400 students), 25 middle schools (average 500 students), and 17 high schools (average 800 students) for a total of 140 schools. Currently, DCPS operates 147 schools including special education schools.

If DCPS continues to operate all 140-147 schools, there may be millions of underutilized square feet available for alternative use.

#### Strategy:

- 1) To the extent feasible, the city should retain school sites (and adjacent public land) in the public domain. This is especially true for transitioning and emerging neighborhoods where public investment can be pivotal and population growth is uncertain.
  - If the building has historic value or is in fair condition, consider leasing space to a charter school or other public/private entity.
  - If the building is razed, the land should be preserved as public open space for passive and/or active recreational uses or future reuse. However, no school should be razed until it is clear that is not needed to house public school students.
- 2) The city should plan for the preservation and revitalization of all school facilities, regardless of the use(r).
- 3) The city should plan for the use or reuse of all school sites as part of an interagency neighborhood strategy that considers government, non-profit organizations, and private partners. (Note: Charter schools have first priority to excess school space)
- 4) Parks and Recreation, the Office of Planning, and DMPED should enhance and preserve open space and recreational areas adjacent to schools. Currently 68 District schools have less than a 3 acre site.<sup>17</sup> These sites provide limited parking and no play fields.

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<sup>17</sup>National site standards suggest 10 acres for elementary school, 15 acres for middle schools and 20-30 acres for high schools.

## Implications:

- 1) For the city and/or DCPS to continue to own and revitalize most of the current school sites, additional funding must be identified. DMPED and DCPS should work together to pursue public/private ventures that would supplement public funding.

Provision for Joint Planning in the SNIP Neighborhoods

The City has targeted twelve residential neighborhoods for strategic neighborhood investment programs (SNIP), ten commercial strips for revitalization, and several areas for intensive housing recovery and repair. In addition, there are numerous renewal programs that are replacing older and/or subsidized apartment areas with mixed housing neighborhoods (HOPE VI).

The goal is to spur public and private reinvestment in emerging/transitional neighborhoods by applying a variety of investment strategies. Investment in the local public school can be a valuable tool for revitalization by improving the exterior grounds and façade, by providing safe, family oriented activities and services, and by offering a quality education for families wishing to stay in the city. Table 3 below shows the match between the City's SNIP neighborhoods and the DCPS Facilities Master Plan.

**Table 3: School Utilization and Modernization Plans within the SNIP neighborhoods**

SNIP Neighborhood	Planning Area	School	Program Capacity	2002 Enrollment	Facilities Plan Recommendation
Bellevue	A	Patterson ES	520	326	Tier 0 – Under construction
	A	Leckie ES <sup>*18</sup>	426	377	
	A	PR Harris K-8*	1082	917	Co-location as swing space
Congress Heights	A	Ballou HS	1419	964	Tier .5 – (Partial) Under Construction
	A	Hart MS	1006	578	Tier 4 Modernization (600 cap)
	A	Simon ES	506	406	
	A	M.C. Terrell ES	366	287	
	A	McGogney ES	454	434	
	A	ML King ES	526	464	
	A	Green ES	506	411	
	A	Malcolm X ES	678	562	
	A	Turner ES*	540	513	Tier 2 Modernization (400 cap)
Historic Anacostia	A	Birney ES*	616	529	Tier 1 Modernization
	A	Savoy ES	424	385	
	B	Ketcham ES	512	413	Tier 4 Modernization
Pennsylvania Ave. SE	B	Anacostia HS*	948	693	Tier 2 Modernization
	B	Kramer MS*	597	369	Tier 2 Modernization

<sup>18</sup> \* = Adjacent to the SNIP neighborhood



Neighborhood	Planning Area	School	Capacity	2002 Enrollment	Facilities Plan Recommendation
	B	Orr ES	426	407	
	B	Randle Highlands ES	520	479	Tier 0 - Under Construction
Minnesota/Benning	C	Edison Charter			
	C	Benning ES*	286	239	
	C	Woodson HS and Kelly Miller MS*			New schools in feeder pattern
Near Southeast	D	Van Ness ES	340	250	
	D	Bowen ES*	360	294	Tier 3 Modernization
Ivy City/Trinidad	D	JO Wilson ES	446	414	
	D	Ludlow-Taylor ES	378	278	
	D	Miner ES*	548	462	Tier 0 - Complete
	E	Wheatley ES	550	350	Tier 1 Modernization
	E	Webb ES	586	535	
Shaw	E	MM Washington			Closure under consideration
	E	J F Cook ES	288	248	
	E	Dunbar HS	993	931	
	D	RH Terrell JHS*	546	294	Tier 2 Modernization
	D	Walker Jones ES*	552	529	Tier 1 Modernization
	F	Montgomery ES	426	314	
	F	Cleveland ES	320	238	Tier 0 – Under construction
	F	Seaton ES	444	441	
	F	Garnett-Patterson	390	328	
	F	Shaw MS	693	534	Tier 3 Modernization
	F	Cardozo HS*	1019	749	Tier 2 Modernization
Columbia Heights	F	Bell HS/Lincoln MS	NA		Tier .5 - Under Construction
	F	Tubman ES	622	635	
Takoma	H	Takoma K-8	467	445	

The current Facilities Plan (thru Tier 4) proposes 65% of the modernization projects for schools in or adjacent to the SNIP neighborhoods in Planning Areas A-F. However, there are many schools in the SNIPs that are not scheduled for a capital project at this time. Due to limited funding, DCPS will not be able to expand the program to include additional schools.

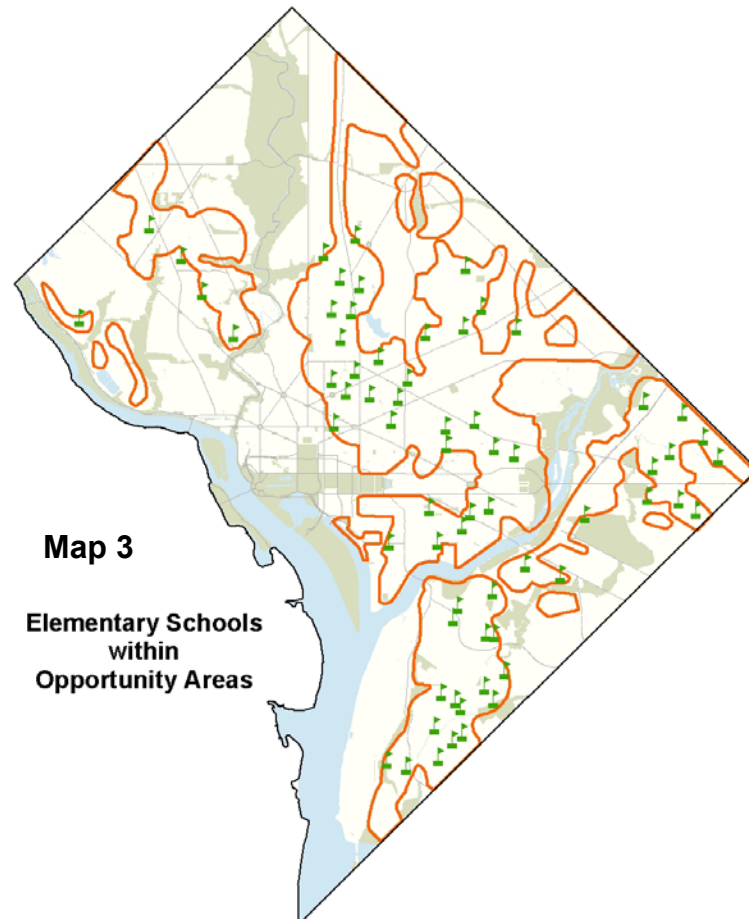
There are no SNIP neighborhoods in Area G and only one in Area H. For equity reasons, the Facilities Plan proposes the modernization of one school a year in these planning areas. It is unlikely that DCPS will support a reorganization of the modernization program that does not include an equitable distribution of funding. This will limit the number of schools in the SNIP areas targeted for future modernization to a maximum of seven per year with maximum funding.

Strategy:

- 1) The City should support school modernizations and/or historic preservation of schools to spur revitalization in targeted neighborhoods (see Map 3).
- 2) The City should encourage more public investment in the SNIP neighborhoods through a combination of budget priorities and public/private partnerships.
  - a. When DCPS develops the criteria for the selection of schools for Tiers 5 and above, schools in SNIP areas should be given priority. DCPS should work with city planners to identify key schools for consideration. The public charter schools should be included in this dialogue.
  - b. SNIP neighborhood schools, not on the modernization program should receive targeted funds through component replacement and small capital projects (new windows, doors, HVAC, etc.).
  - c. Funding for major capital projects in SNIP areas may include public/private partnerships or joint projects with City libraries or Parks and Recreation. The Facilities Master Plan supports the coordination and, in some cases, acceleration of projects with alternative funding.

### Map 3






### Elementary Schools within Opportunity Areas



**Government of the District of Columbia**  
**Anthony A. Williams, Mayor**

**Office of Planning - September 5, 2003**

This map was created for planning purposes from a variety of sources. It is neither a survey nor a legal document. Information provided by other agencies should be verified with them where appropriate.

-  Elementary Schools
-  Opportunity Areas
-  Roads
-  Water
-  Parks



## Implications:

- 1) The city should hold joint work sessions with DCPS, the charter schools, and other agencies to understand the implication of school funding decisions on overall city strategies. Projects that support city goals and show collaboration should receive priority funds.
- 2) Joint projects between DCPS and other city agencies may require increased capital funding in the short run. This will need to be balanced against the long-term benefits of reusing existing buildings and sharing operating costs.

Provision for Schools in Non-Traditional Settings

Charter schools are playing a unique role in non-traditional settings around the country. Small successful charter schools are appearing at zoos, shopping malls, office buildings, and museums. Students benefit by being immersed in a rich hands-on environment, by having access to transportation, or by being close to a working parent. Sponsors benefit as well by broadening their own mission and customer base.

Although public schools are allowed in most zones, land use planners and developers often see certain properties as 'too valuable' for a school – commercial areas, corner lots, and transit hubs. However, as the city explores ways to rebuild neighborhoods and commercial areas, small schools should be seen as an opportunity for 'place-making' – creating opportunities for intergenerational activities, transforming street-life, and developing community ownership.

## Strategy:

- 1) Through development agreements the city should encourage public/private partnerships that support schools in non-traditional settings.

## Implications:

- 1) Planning with the charter schools must be done through the organizations to which the charter schools belong, or through the individual charter schools themselves.

Provision for Joint Community Services Planning

Currently, the co-location of community, health, or recreational services in public schools is 'hit or miss'. If a provider needs space, if the school has space, if the principal is cooperative, the providers move in. But more often, than not, the schools are seen as uncooperative and unwilling to give up space for outside programs. Conversely, most principals insist they are constantly fielding requests to use their buildings. White and Wehlage<sup>19</sup> suggest that this tendency to view schools as just sites for coordinated services undermines the goals of community schools as part of a strategy for school and neighborhood revitalization.

The goal of the school-linked services movement is to establish ways to increase access to services, reduce redundancy, improve case management, and coordinate resources. However, the tendency is to think in terms of coordinating community services and co-locating some on school sites. This emphasis downplays the need to (1) restructure programs and services owned and operated by schools and (2) weave school and community resources with mutually dependent goals.

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<sup>19</sup> White, J.A., & Wehlage, G. (1995). Community collaboration: If it is such a good idea, why is it so hard to do? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 17

First, the District of Columbia must reframe the conversation between community service providers and public schools if ‘community schools – as neighborhood anchors’ are to become a reality. Future planning needs to focus more on the program partnerships and the advantages of coordinated services than the joint use of vacant space.

Second, the City and DCPS must agree to a common vision and commit the resources. Some offices in the City are working with some offices in DCPS to coordinate programs for transformation schools or wrap-around services. But there is no clear direction to focus on the SNIP neighborhoods, or Hope VI Grant areas, or schools undergoing modernization. The charter schools should also be a part of this dialogue, as they too can become ‘community anchors’ and centers for the delivery of wrap-around services.

Third, the implementation of the neighborhood planning process must take place at the local schools/neighborhoods level. In response to growing interest in school reform and community based services, various forms of school-community collaborations are being implemented around the country, including a couple of state-wide initiatives in California, Florida, New Jersey, and Oregon. Unfortunately, many recent studies point to the difficulties of establishing truly collaborative programs. Distrust and turf battles plague start-up efforts. Conflicting missions and regulations slow communications. ‘Top-down’ initiatives often fail to involve the core problem solvers in the process. Most successful school reform efforts and community programs are driven by the local school community where trusting relationships are formed, common goals can be agreed to, and there is creative freedom.

Fourth, the success of a community schools initiative in the District may depend on anchoring the programs in the mission of schools – education and families. Schools tend to become concerned about addressing problems when they become a barrier to student learning or a negative influence on the school climate. Lacking sufficient resources to address the range of family, health, and economic challenges facing their students, schools, families, and communities may be motivated to work together to develop a cohesive, comprehensive, multifaceted approach. (White, J.A., & Wehlage, G. (1995))

Finally, not all schools will bring the same capacity for community connection. Families maintain their closest ties to elementary schools. They can walk to the school, use the day care services, and attend school functions. They are more likely to know their child’s teacher and other staff in the building. Most DCPS elementary schools already offer meal programs, summer school, and parent resource rooms. Elementary schools make ideal ‘community anchors.’ There are more than 100 potential anchors in the District, to emphasize the magnitude of this initiative.

By middle and high school, many parents have become alienated from the local school. They attend school functions once or twice a year. They need floor plans to find their student’s classes. As a young parent or senior citizen, middle and high schools often seem less safe and more intimidating. By contrast, middle and high schools may be more accessible to main roads and public transportation. They have more amenities such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, and vocational training facilities. In DCPS, middle and high schools are also more likely to have large amounts of space available - whole wings or floors of a building.

Developing public schools as community anchors and co-locating city and school services on school sites may fill under-utilized school buildings. It may provide better coordination of services in high-risk neighborhoods. It may contribute to the revitalization of emerging and transitioning neighborhoods.

Strategy:

- 1) DCPS, charter schools, and the city should embrace a collaborative service plan and develop a 'community anchor' model for schools as follows:
  - a. Elementary schools should be considered for family focused centers (minimum level of service)
  - b. Middle or high schools should be considered as community anchors. While planning would need to be done on a case-by-case basis, these schools should have more than just family-service opportunities. Ideas include education courses for adults, job training, public library, community center, and health clinics.
- 2) The City and DCPS should commit to the neighborhood-based planning model. They should adjust citywide plans for health, recreation, social services, and schools to match the neighborhood priority areas and develop community service plans beginning with SNIP neighborhoods and schools scheduled for modernization.

Implications:

- 1) This program will need strong leadership and dedicated staff to build models that work successfully to benefit schools and neighborhoods.
- 2) Distributing services at such a small scale (the elementary school) will stretch the resources of the community service providers.

Provision for High School Partnerships

The DCPS high school reform model proposes three career clusters at every 'zoned' high school. These career academies are tied to local industry needs and need educational and industry-based partners. Several charter schools also have career-oriented programs

Partnerships can bring mentors and highly qualified educators into the DC high schools as well as offer students intern and apprenticeships in work settings. Partners can also assist with upgrading school equipment to be consistent with current standards. In exchange high schools may offer mid-career training centers for adults during twilight and evening classes (expanded Stay programs)

**Career Clusters**

- 1. Agriculture and Natural Sciences**
- 2. Arts, Media & Communications**
- 3. Business and Finance**
- 4. Construction and Development**
- 5. Health and Medical Sciences**
- 6. Hospitality and Tourism**
- 7. Public Service**
- 8. Sales, Service, and Entrepreneurship**
- 9. Technology and Manufacturing**
- 10. Transportation**

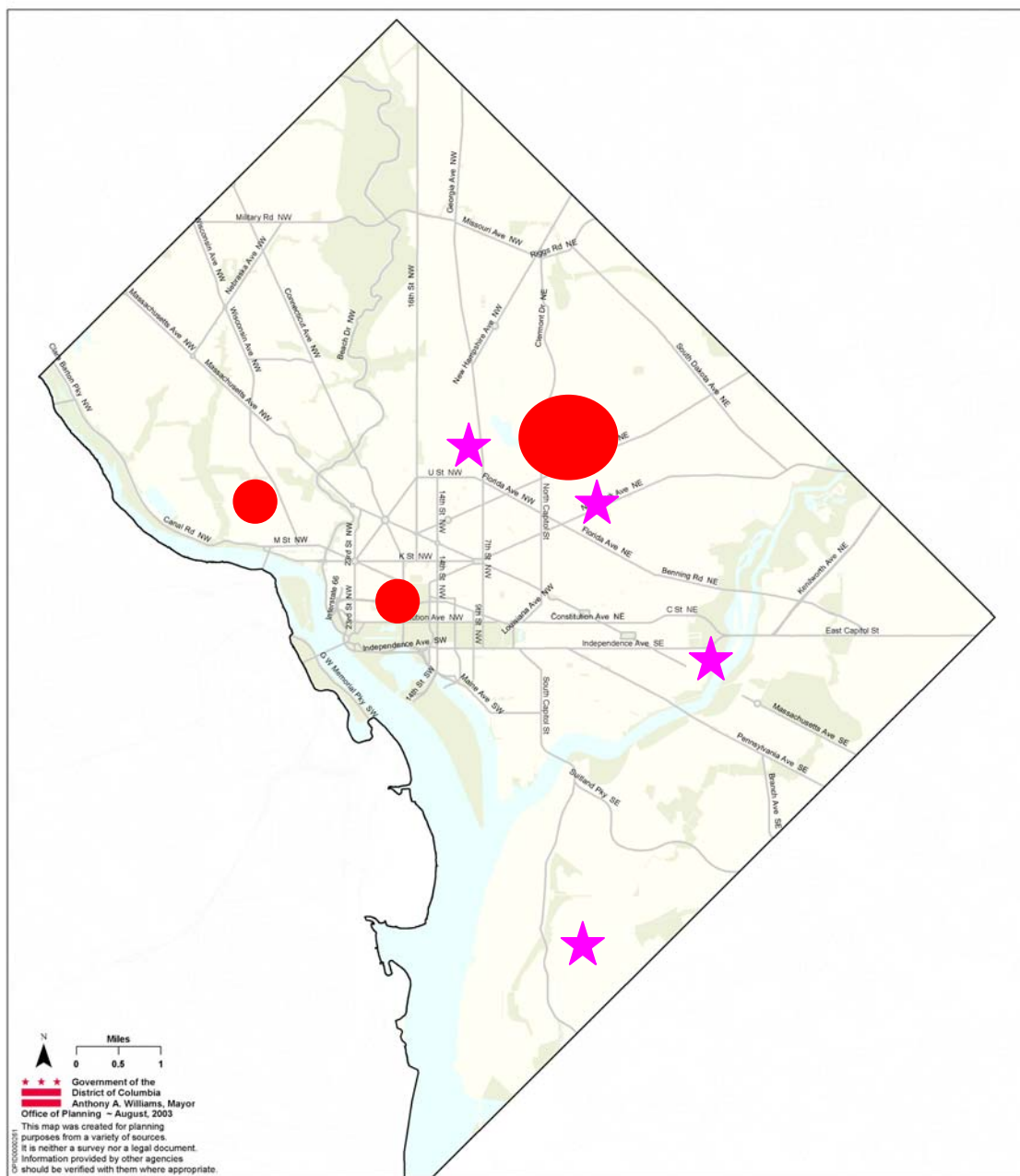
The career academies for each high school have been tentatively selected based on the strength of schools' current programs and a geographic distribution that ensures that most academies will be offered in each region.

Strategy:

- 1) High Schools should work with economic and university partners associated with their career academies to share resources and enhance training opportunities.

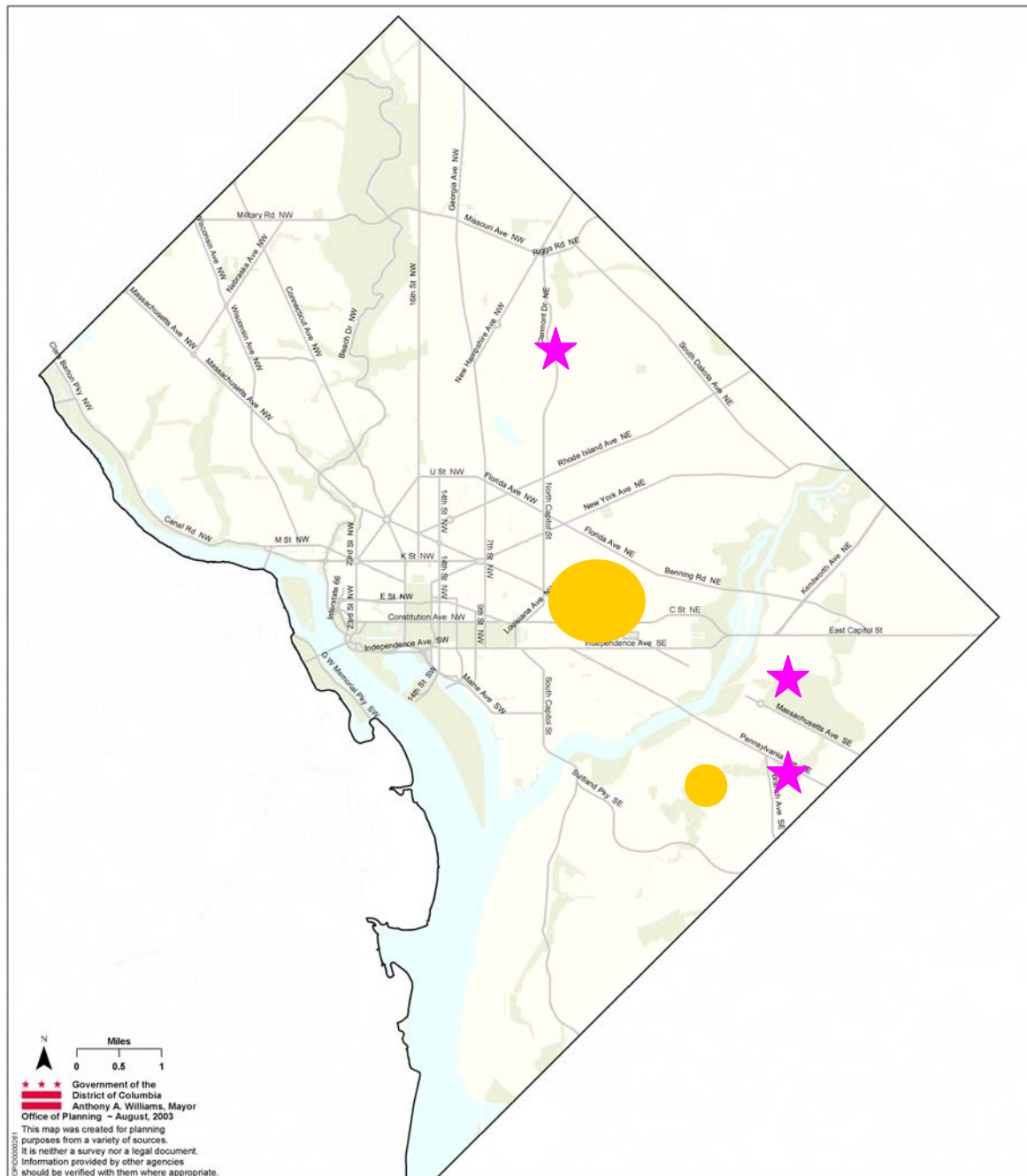
Implications:

- 1) Some industries are concentrated in regions in the District. High Schools adjacent to these areas may want to customize academies to take advantage of the local businesses. (See Maps 4, 5, and 6)



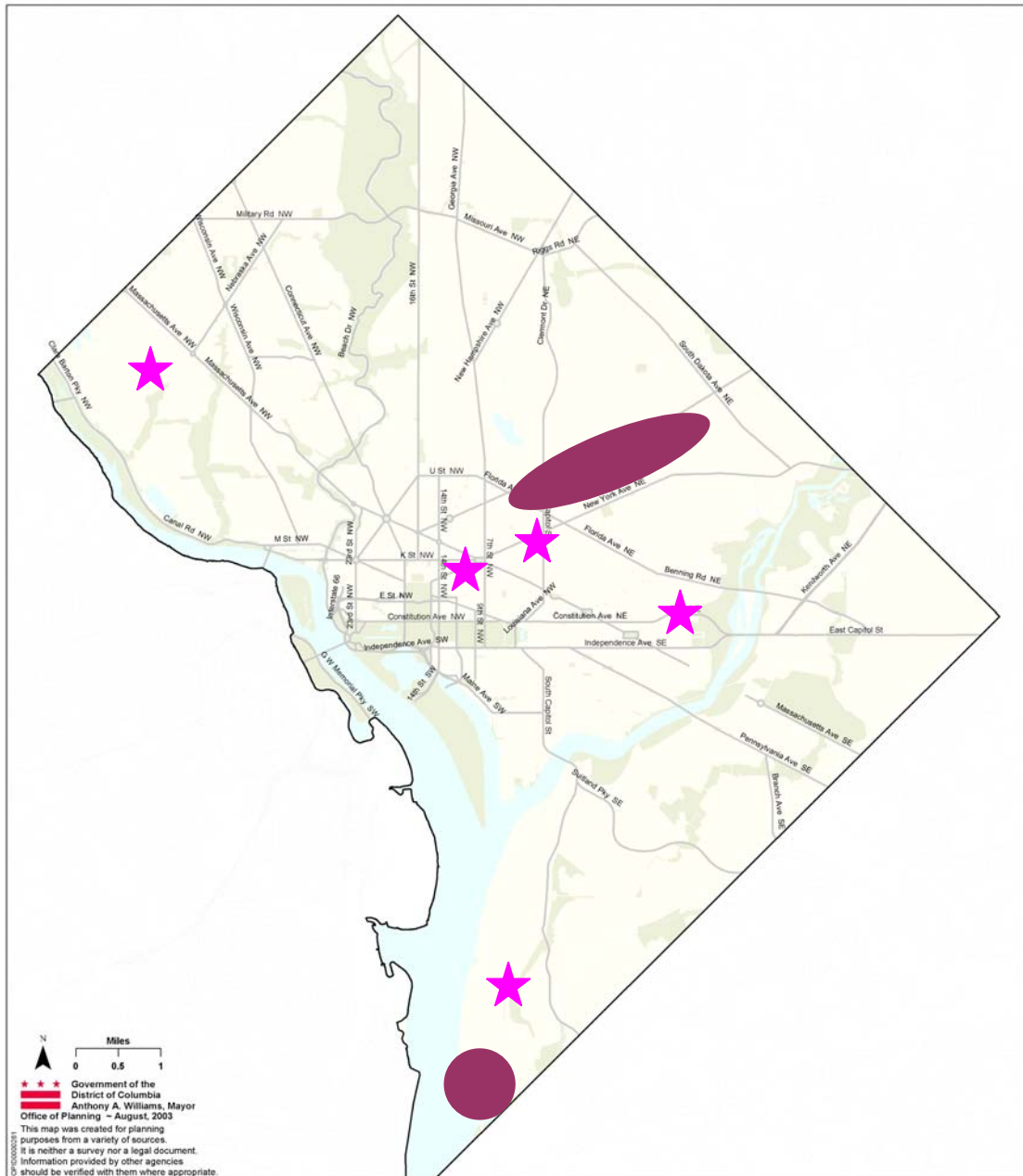
**Map 4:**  
**Concentrations of Health and Medical Service Employment (red circles) and**  
**Location of Health and Medical Cluster High Schools (purple stars)**





**Map 5:**  
**Concentrations of Hospitality and Tourism Employment (gold circles) and**  
**Location of Hospitality and Tourism Cluster High Schools (purple stars)**





**Map 6:**  
**Concentrations of Technology and Manufacturing Employment (maroon circles)**  
**and**  
**Location of Technology and Science Cluster High Schools (purple stars)**